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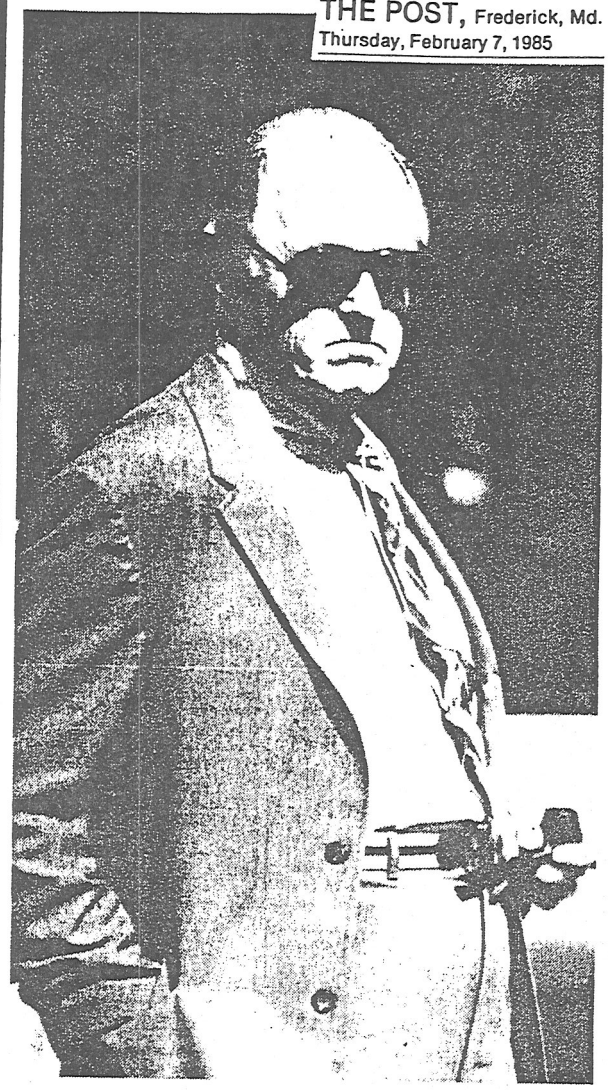

E. Howard Hunt

Federal jury says Hunt not libeled

MIAMI (AP)—A federal jury denied Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt $1 million in damages Wednesday, deciding that he was not libeled in an article by an ex-CIA agent suggesting Hunt was part of a conspiracy to assassinate President John F. Kennedy.

In a trial four years ago, Hunt was awarded $650,000 in damages. That verdict was overturned because of a flawed instruction to the jury.

This time a six-member jury found in favor of Liberty Lobby, a right-wing Washington group that publishes *The Spotlight* tabloid, where the article appeared in 1978.

One juror, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the panel felt that no evidence was presented showing malice toward Hunt by the publication. The judge had instructed the jury before it began deliberating Tuesday that evidence of malice was necessary to find for Hunt.

Hunt displayed little emotion as the verdict was read and declined comment. His lawyer, William Snyder of Baltimore, said the two men would confer about a possible appeal.

Attorney Mark Lane, a long-time critic of the Warren Commission findings and other investigations of the assassination, defended Liberty Lobby.

Outside court he said that unidentified journalists "do everything in their power to protect the governmental establishment which has hidden the truth from the American people."

In his closing argument Tuesday, Lane repeated charges he presented during seven days of testimony, including claims of coverups and flawed investigation, while telling the jury that Hunt, an ex-CIA agent, and the agency both disliked Kennedy.

"The government of the United States has never conducted a serious investigation to tell us the truth," said Lane, author of the 1966 best seller "Rush to Judgment."

The focus of the suit was an article written by former CIA agent Victor Marchetti and publishedseven years ago. The article contended that a 1966 CIA memo purportedly said Hunt was in Dallas the day Kennedy was slain and suggested he had a role in the murder.

Hunt, who spent 33 months in prison for the Watergate burglary, has denied the claims.